

A TRIPLE-A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

HON. BILL RICHARDSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 1995

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, as the chaos of major league baseball's labor dispute continues to unfold, the spirit of baseball is alive and well in minor league baseball and the 1994 Pacific Coast league champion Albuquerque Dukes are ready for the new season.

Regardless of the outcome of the major league strike, the Albuquerque Dukes will continue to set the pace for well-managed professional baseball businesses in the country. The Dukes boast 8 straight years of 300,000-plus in attendance, a record average gate for 1994, a waiting list for advertisers, and competitive teams every season.

The Dukes' general manager and president Pat McKernan personifies the enthusiasm and devotion that prevails in the hearts of all baseball fans. By combining old-fashioned business sense and community support, Pat McKernan provides one of the most affordable family entertainment offerings in New Mexico.

I recommend to all my colleagues the following article about Mr. McKernan and the Dukes which appeared in the Albuquerque Business Times on March 6, 1995. I believe all Members will be encouraged to see that baseball and business can coexist for the good of the community and the sport.

ALB.'S BOOMING BASEBALL BIZ

(By Michael G. Murphy)

ALBUQUERQUE.—Considered a gem—if not the gem—of Triple-A diamonds in the rough, the Albuquerque Dukes are buffing the bleachers, lifting new light towers, and making ready for '95.

Sometimes hidden by its on-field sports success, the local slice of America's pastime ranks year after year as one of the most prolific and well-managed professional baseball businesses in the United States.

This year—strike or settlement in the majors—stands to be yet another winning season in terms of gate, advertising, and general bang for entertainment buck.

The Dukes' boast eight straight years of 300,000 plus in attendance, a record average gate for '94, a waiting list for advertisers, not to mention competitive teams every season.

Business and the support of the community has been wonderful, said President and General Manager Pat McKernan.

Economic impact is not a useful phrase for him ("They make those numbers up, don't they?") but reluctantly, has led the charge. He has been flanked by Ron Nelson, president of the Uptown Association, and Cathy Leyendecker, board member of the Mark Twain Neighborhood Association.

Leyendecker has a different view for future projects, but sided with Salazar and Nelson in a uniform front he will point to the parent organization of the minors—the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues (NAPBL)—which does dabble in financial figures.

According to a recent NAPBL model, an average Triple-A club generates about \$13 million a year in everything from hotels, meals, travel, local goods and services, scouts, umpires, and salaries.

Now, that is a SWAG or Scientific Wild Ass Guess in NASA parlance, said Neil Thueson, an associate planner with the city of Albuquerque who also teaches a UNM market research class in sports administration.

"It had some validity because it is based on kind of a model, but it does not apply to any single city."

And that is one reason the city is embarking this year on its own SWAG that will measure the impact of the Dukes all by themselves, Thueson said.

There is one given: the Dukes provide one of the most affordable family entertainment offerings anywhere, and it doesn't happen accidentally.

"McKernan deliberately does keep the prices down so that it can appeal to the family. He really does understand what he is doing. He understands the difference between the types of pricing policies."

Thueson said he has tried over the years to explain McKernan's expertise and success to UNM athletics, and how it could benefit the university.

"We talked to them about overall profitability and tried to get them to understand . . . but they never would."

McKernan, the barrel-chested and bearded business and baseball guru prefers interesting conversation, which doesn't include talk of pricing policies, corporate management, or even how the Dukes will do this year ("I don't know," he says).

McKernan likes to ask your age, get an answer, then add, "Oh, you just look old." He also enjoys inquiring, "Your second marriage?" and how you managed to screw up such a promising job elsewhere to end up here.

But the Dukes' resident optimist, wearing a "what, me worry?" expression, did talk about how just about anything that could happen with the strike should benefit the organization, and all minor league ball for that matter.

If the strike continues without replacements, it's the only game in town.

If the strike continues with replacements, it's arguably going to be a better brand of the only game in town.

And if the strike is settled, any residual fan resentment at the major league level—live, on TV or radio—can only boost Dukes' attendance, and the listening and occasional viewing audience.

It is a win-win-win situation, McKernan said.

There is an "understanding" among baseball owners, major league players, and the minor league players to make sure minor leaguers don't endanger their future careers by getting in the middle of the strike, McKernan said.

Management has no intention of "twisting any arms" to try to get Triple A players to become replacements, he said.

"They understand the dilemma. And we understand the dilemma far more than the players' association."

If the strike continues, they will report to the Dukes, probably right before the first game, April 6.

There is one possible negative, and that has to do with the chance that Congress, in screwing around with baseball's federal anti-trust exemption, will accidentally repeal a portion that allows major league financial support for the minors.

Still, McKernan, whose photo should be right next to laid-back in your Webster's, has not been losing any sleep. As he said, it is not something he can do much about, so he is not going to worry about it.

His cluttered office includes the Optimists Creed on his door, a Far Side calendar on his desk, a fish tank, and a photocopied motto that the "floggings will continue until morale improves."

The Dukes enjoy phenomenal community support. Last year, when they announced a ticket price increase of \$1, local media published the story with variations on the

theme of "it's about time" and still one of the best entertainment values in town, a bemused McKernan said.

It was the first price hike in eight years.

In about four weeks, the minor league boys of summer will strut their stuff in what promises to be an excellent and perhaps record-setting year.

Oh yeah, and the bottom line looks good again for the successful business that is the Dukes.

"We do all right . . . we survive in spite of ourselves," McKernan said.

COMMENDING THE HEROIC ACTIONS OF SECRET SERVICE AGENTS

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 1995

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, as ranking member of the House Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, I rise today to commend nine members of the U.S. Secret Service for their heroic efforts in helping rescue almost 2 dozen individuals from a burning building in Washington, DC.

Many Americans view the role of agents of the U.S. Secret Service as that of protecting the President of the United States and the members of his Cabinet—which it is. However, on March 14, officers Thomas F. Owens, Jr., Gregory S. Cleckner, Paolo Palumbo, Phillip M. Bernal, George L. Sax, Kenneth J. Bouley, Kenneth B. Parsons, and Sergeants William S. Rick and Charles F. Kuzmovich of the Uniformed Division of the Secret Service, went beyond their assigned duties and helped to evacuate 21 residents from an engulfed building on 14th Street NW in Washington, DC.

The Secret Service officers on the scene, even prior to the arrival of the fire department, not only went door to door and helped residents leave the structure, but they also assisted a number of individuals who were trapped in windows and were afraid to leave the structure.

Mr. Speaker, the quick-thinking efforts by these nine Secret Service agents undoubtedly helped to save the lives of a number of individuals and I hope my colleagues join me in saluting their heroic efforts.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JUDGE NICHOLAS TSOUCALAS

HON. THOMAS J. MANTON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 24, 1995

Mr. MANTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the Queens Borough Lodge No. 878 in honoring Judge Nicholas Tsoucalas, Judge of the United States Court of International Trade, for his service to his community, his County, and the Second Department.

A native of New York City, Judge Tsoucalas, began his education in the public elementary and secondary schools of New York City. He continued his higher education of Kent State University where he received a